

It's Everybody's Business!

1ST EDITION - 2007

FREE!

Aging Well

Researchers looking at the issue of successful aging have identified the following 10 behaviors and attitudes that provide older adults with the best opportunities to age well:

1. *Don't smoke* -- if you still do, it's never too late to quit.
2. *If you drink, drink moderately* -- one alcoholic drink a day doesn't hurt, and may even reduce your chances of heart disease. But alcohol abuse can lead to disability and early death.
3. *Stay physically active* -- find something you love to do and do it regularly. Exercise is associated with a variety of good outcomes, from increased memory to reduced rates of heart disease, depression and cancer.
4. *Eat a balanced diet* -- limit the fats in your diet and try to include at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
5. *Avoid obesity* -- being significantly overweight is associated with a variety of negative health outcomes including heart disease and diabetes.
6. *Protect your vision and hearing* -- your eyes and ears are critical to functions such as driving and reading. They also help you remain engaged in conversations and relationships.
7. *Get regular health care and vaccinations* -- you can prevent many problems before they require more serious treatment.
8. *Maintain an active social network and strong personal relationships* -- it's good for your health and for how you experience your later years.
9. *Stay active in professional, community or other activities* -- feeling useful is positively associated with good outcomes as people age.
10. *Plan for your financial well-being* -- having the money to meet your material needs can increase your chances of successful aging.
www.pioneerthinking.com/ara-aging.html

Encompass

Encompass is a searchable listing of all Winnipeg Regional Health Authority health services, programs and organizations. Encompass is part of the CONTACT Community listings which includes not-for-profit services available throughout Manitoba and across Canada. Search Encompass to find health services near you.

www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/encompass.php

Manitoba Statistics on Older Adults

There are approximately 158,676 people 65+ in Manitoba (91,186 women and 67,490 men—Manitoba Health, 2004). Canadian research suggests that between 4 and 10% of older adults experience one or more forms of abuse or neglect at some point in their later years (approximately 6,000 to 15,000 older Manitobans). It is likely a much larger problem as elder abuse often does not come to the attention of those who can help.

Age & Opportunity Programs & Services

Age & Opportunity Inc. is a social service agency that offers life-enhancing programs and services to older adults. Age & Opportunity's programs and services support and enhance the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual lives of older persons and actively promote participation in all aspects of community life.

Social Services Available:

- Elder Abuse Services
- Older Victim Services
- SafetyAid Program
- Friendly Visiting
- Paws with a Cause
- Bereavement Support Groups
- Counselling Services
- This Full House
- English as an Additional Language
- Tax Clinics and Legal Services
- Housing Consultations
- Information & Referral

Programs Available:

- Social Programs
- Recreational Programs
- Educational Programs
- Healthy Living Programs
- Active Lifestyle Programs

For more information please contact Age & Opportunity at 956-6440



- What is EA?
- Identifying EA
- What to do if you suspect EA
- Why EA is not reported

- When should I call?
- Should I talk to a lawyer?
- Preventing EA
- Truths and Myths
- Gambling & Addictions

- Your Rights
- WEAAD Day
- Manitoba EA Strategy
- Ageism
- Resources

CONTENTS

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse is any action or lack of action by someone in a position of trust that harms the health or well-being of an older person. Elder abuse can happen at home, in the community, and in hospital and long term care facilities. Abuse exists in many different forms. Abuse can be physical, psychological, or sexual. It can also exist in the form of neglect and financial exploitation.

Identifying Elder Abuse

What are possible signs of abuse?

The abused older adult may exhibit any of the following:

Physical

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, cuts, burns, swellings, scratches
- Injury where explanation does not fit injury
- Medical history does not coincide with presenting injuries
- Fear and edginess in the presence of a caregiver or family member

Psychological/Emotional

- Withdrawal or extreme passivity
- Fear, anxiety, edginess, agitation
- Excluded from discussions and major decisions
- Restricted access to: telephone, food, family, service providers
- May indicate fear of being left alone with the alleged abuser

Financial

- Signed a Power of Attorney against own will
- Forced to change will or sell house
- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Indicates papers were signed but doesn't know what for
- Lack of money to pay for food, medication, clothing, glasses or other necessities
- Missing possessions
- Unusual activities occurring in bank accounts

Neglect

- Malnourishment
- Untreated medical problems

Why Elder Abuse is Not Reported

- Fear of retaliation or punishment
- Fear of abandonment or rejection by the abuser or other family members
- Family loyalty
- Shame and embarrassment if the abuser is a spouse or other family member
- Fear of placement in an institution

What should I do if I suspect an older person is being abused?

If you are concerned about the immediate safety of that person call 911 or your local police, ambulance or fire service. If you do not feel it is an emergency, but are still concerned, make the effort to reach out to that person and ask things such as:

- How are you doing?
- Are you having any trouble at home? Can I help you?
- Is there someone I can put you in touch with who may be able to help you?
- How would you like to be assisted?

If a person tells you that they are being abused you should:

- **BELIEVE the person.** Do not question what they are telling you. You may be the very first person that has ever been entrusted with this information. It may be hard to understand what is going on especially if the alleged perpetrator is someone you know.

Emily's Story

“My aunt recently sold her house and moved in with her son. She had been in poor health for a number of years and could no longer look after her house. I'm not sure what is happening to her but I am concerned that her son may not be looking after her properly. When I visited her recently she looked so thin and frail. Her clothing smelled so strongly of urine that I almost gagged. When I asked her son how she was doing and if she was getting enough to eat he got angry at me. One time she lay on the floor for hours until her son came back home the next day. Her son did not seem to think her injuries were serious and did not bother to take her to the hospital until after she developed some complications. He also told me that he needed to work and have a social life and could not spend all his time looking after his mother. I was shocked when he told me that he thought she was just doing these things to get attention. I'm really worried about what will happen to her.”

- **Do not judge the person.** Listen to what they are saying to you. Tell them you care about them and offer support.

- **Educate yourself on resources available to older persons who are being abused.** You can do this by calling your local seniors' organization, or the Seniors Abuse Line.

- **Do not deny what is going on.** If you choose to deny what is going on or do not listen to a person, this will serve to isolate the person who is being abused even further.

- **Understand that making efforts to change an abusive relationship is extremely difficult.** A person who is being abused is often afraid and not certain what to do. It can take a long time for people to decide to make a change in their lives, to reach out for help or to even talk about their situation.

- **Encourage the person to seek help and assistance.** Offer to help them find the right place to turn to if this is something you are prepared and able to do.

- **Do not confront the perpetrator yourself.** This could put you and/or the person who is being abused in danger.

Remember, if you or someone you know has been abused or is experiencing abuse, you are not alone – help is available.

When should I call?

When should I call the Police?

The police should be contacted if you suspect that there is immediate or impending harm to an older person. Contact your local police agency should you have any concerns about safety and well being issues of anyone in your community.

Winnipeg Emergency: **911**
 non-emergency: 986-6222
 Outside Winnipeg: 911 or check local listings

When should I call Age & Opportunity?

At Age & Opportunity, counsellors are available to assist seniors who are experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation by family members or other caregivers. They can also assist with providing temporary shelter for older adults leaving an abusive situation.

Winnipeg 956-6440

When should I call the *Protection for Persons in Care* Office?

The Protection for Persons in Care Act is a law to help protect adults from abuse while receiving care in personal care homes, hospitals or any other designated health facility. In Manitoba, it is mandatory to report suspected abuse in these settings. This means that anyone who has a reasonable basis to believe abuse is occurring, or is likely to occur, must report these concerns as soon as possible.

Winnipeg 788-6366
 Outside Winnipeg 1-866-440-6366

When should I call the Seniors Abuse Line?

The Seniors Abuse Line staff provide information about community resources and support services that are available throughout Manitoba.

Winnipeg 945-1884
 Outside Winnipeg 1-888-896-7183

When should I call Health Links-Info Santé?

The Health Links– Info Santé phone line provides free health advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 110 languages. They will help you find health care resources in your community.

Winnipeg 788-8200
 Outside Winnipeg 1-888-315-9257

Other helpful phone numbers:



Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre
 925-3700
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Gambling Helpline
 1-800-463-1554
Farm and Rural Stress Line
 1-866-367-3276
Klinic
 784-4090

Mobile Crisis
 857-6369 (North) or 325-9700 (South)
Residential Tenancies Branch
 945-2476 or 1-800-782-8403

Do I need to talk to a lawyer?

Don't wait until its too late...plan ahead!

It is very important for all adults to plan for their personal and financial security. One of the ways to do this is to ensure that your wishes will be known even when you are no longer able to express them. This can be accomplished through:

- Enduring Power of Attorney
- Health Care Directive (also known as a "Living Will")
- Will

These are powerful legal documents and therefore you should consult with a lawyer before signing. In the case of a Health Care Directive you should consider consulting with a medical professional as well. **Never** sign anything that you don't understand or agree with!

If you have concerns about abuse:

Some forms of abuse may require legal intervention. For example, in order to decide how to deal with many situations of financial abuse, including misuse of a Power of Attorney, theft, forgery, you will need legal information. Knowing what your rights are is an important first step in determining how to resolve concerns about abuse. For assistance with legal questions please contact the *Law Phone-In and Lawyer Referral Program* at **943-2305 (in Winnipeg) or 1-800-262-8800**.

Email: info@communitylegal.mb.ca
 Website: www.communitylegal.mb.ca

This program provides general legal information to callers. Where the caller requires formal legal advice the program can provide a referral to a lawyer. When making referrals the program staff will consider the area of law, geographical area of caller, language, etc in order to make an appropriate match. The lawyer to whom you are referred will advise you during an interview lasting about a half hour. You will not be charged for this interview. If you need further legal help, you may (if the lawyer agrees) hire the lawyer at a fee to be decided between the both of you.

What about the Public Trustee?

The Public Trustee is an office of last resort, which means they are only involved when required to because all other avenues have been exhausted. Most often the Public Trustee will be required to act on behalf of a person who is no longer capable of making financial or legal decisions **and**

- There is no Enduring Power of Attorney so no one has the authority to make decisions on behalf of the incapable person;
- No one is willing to apply to court to obtain the authority to make decisions; or
- Someone is taking advantage of the incapable person, for example by misusing a power of attorney.

The Public Trustee provides other services as well. For more information on the role of the *Public Trustee* call 945-2700 (in Winnipeg) or 1-800-282-8069

Email: publictrustee@gov.mb.ca
 Website: www.gov.mb.ca/justice/publictrustee

Preventing Elder Abuse:

The following may help you stay safe:

- Ask friends to visit you often
- Participate in community activities
- Have your own telephone, and post and open your own mail
- Arrange to have your pension cheques or other income deposited directly into your bank account
- Get legal advice about arrangements you can make now for possible future disability, such as powers of attorney
- Keep accurate records, accounts and lists of property/assets available for examination by someone you trust
- Review your will periodically and do not make changes to it without careful consideration and/or discussion with a trusted family member or friend
- Give up control of your property or assets only when you decide you can't manage them
- Ask for help when you need it
- Discuss your plans with your attorney, physician or family members

Terry's Story

"I've been having problems with my daughter for some time now. She is so 'hot headed' and bossy. She thinks that just because I am old I don't know what I am doing anymore. She also thinks that she has the right to tell me what to do and how to do it. When I don't do exactly as she wants she becomes so angry with me. She yells and swears at me calling me every ugly name 'in the book'. Other times she doesn't phone or talk to me for weeks until I give in. I find her phone calls and visits so upsetting that I cry and can't eat for days afterward. Every time the phone rings or I hear a knock at my door, I begin to shake. I think to myself... "what now?" At times, I think it would be better not to hear from her, but after all, she is still my daughter."

Gambling and Addictions

Alcohol abuse is one of the most common triggers of elder abuse. Sometimes it is the abusive person that has the alcohol problem and sometimes it is the older person. Gambling and drug addictions are often factors in situations of elder abuse. An older person may feel pressured to provide funds or sign an enduring power of attorney to a family member who has a gambling or drug problem. Often the older person feels a responsibility to provide the money, particularly if it is their own adult child.



"Gambling and drug addictions are often factors in situations of elder abuse."

Elder Abuse "Truths and Myths"

The person who abuses an older adult is often a family member.

True – elder abuse is any action or lack of action by someone in a position of trust that harms the health or well-being of an older person. Often the person in a position of trust is a family member.

Elder abuse is a crime.

Sometimes – it depends on the type of abuse. For example, assault, theft, forgery, uttering threats are crimes under the Criminal Code of Canada. But, some things that may be abusive are not necessarily a crime, for example, name calling, isolating, ignoring, insulting, pressuring to give money, etc.

The majority of older people affected by abuse talk to someone about the abuse.

Myth – most abuse and neglect of older adults goes undetected. Only about one in five cases of elder abuse come to the attention of community

agencies or authorities.

Elder Abuse always involves physical contact.

Myth – abuse may be psychological, financial or neglect. However, often there is more than one type of abuse occurring at the same time.

It is difficult to recognize when an older adult is being abused or neglected.

True – elder abuse may be very difficult to recognize, particularly as most abused seniors are reluctant to talk about it. Therefore, it is very important to be familiar with the possible signs of elder abuse.

Older men are not abused.

Myth– older men also experience elder abuse.

The majority of older people need assistance in managing their financial and personal affairs.

Myth – most older people are able to manage their own affairs. However it is important to plan for the future and have documents in place (e.g. an enduring power of attorney, will and health care directive) in case there is a time in the future when you may need assistance with managing your affairs.

Abuse and neglect of older adults only happens at home.

False – Elder abuse can happen at home, in the community, in hospitals and in long-term care facilities.

Some cultures do not experience abuse or neglect of older adults.

Myth - abuse is not limited to older adults of any particular culture, ethnic group, social background or religion.

Your Rights

Every older individual has the right to:

- **The Basic Necessities of Life**
You have the right to basic requirements of life: food, clothing shelter, medical care, etc.
- **Safety**
You have the right to live in safety and without fear. This includes the right to be free from physical, emotional, psychological and financial abuse as well as neglect.
- **Information**
You have the right to information required to make meaningful and informed choices. This includes information about your legal and civil rights, resources and the range of service options available to you to address your needs.
- **Freedom of choice**
You have the right to make decisions and live your life as you wish provided they do not infringe on the rights or safety of others. This right includes the right to refuse assistance and intervention. There may be instances where an individual's ability to make decisions is in question. These situations should be referred to the doctor.
- **Confidentiality/Privacy**
You have the right to privacy. Most agencies/organizations are governed by privacy policies or legislation that ensures confidentiality is maintained (i.e. Personal Health Information Act)

Rose's Story

"My husband has always been a very angry, controlling man. There wasn't anything that I could do right. If his food wasn't prepared on time the way he liked it he would throw it all against the wall. I used to get hit quite regularly by him. Thank goodness he never touched the children. And he was a good provider. Even if I had thought of leaving him, there was no place for me and my children to go. Not like today. I couldn't provide for them on my own. When I told my parents what was going on they said "You made your own bed, now lie in it". I thought as he got older things might change and he would be easier to get along with. That hasn't happened. He's just as mean as ever. Two months ago he pushed me off some stairs and I twisted my ankle. I told everyone it was an accident. Just last week he got so angry at me that he grabbed me around my neck and began to choke me. I was terrified, I thought I was going to die. I don't remember how I managed to get away. My children are afraid that he will kill me one day. He has warned me that if I leave him he will make sure I get nothing."

Between 4 and 10% of older adults experience at least one or more forms of abuse or neglect.



WEAAD



World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is a day to share information, learn more, discuss the issue of elder abuse, and become involved. It is an opportunity to recognize local and regional efforts made to raise awareness of abuse of older adults. For ideas about how you can recognize this special day in your community, please visit the Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse web-site at www.cnpea.ca.

Gordon's Story

"I'm finding it more difficult to manage financially. I know that my son has a problem with alcohol and possibly other drugs, but I feel that I have to help him out. He always seems to be behind in his rent and utility payments and his credit card bills are "out of this world". He tells me quite often that he cannot afford groceries for his children. He has also told me that 'the authorities' will be by any day now to take away his children. Even if I have to do without, I cannot stand the thought of my grandchildren going hungry or homeless... or worse, never seeing them again. I have had to delay refilling some of my drug prescriptions this month and for the first time I have had to ask my daughter to help me out with some groceries... all because of the money I loaned my son. He has never repaid me."

Provincial Elder Abuse Strategy

The Provincial Elder Abuse Strategy supported by the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat includes:

- an elder abuse consultant;
- a resource coordinator;
- the Seniors Abuse Line;
- education and awareness;
- the development of community based response/monitoring teams;
- funding to Age & Opportunity Inc. for an elder abuse counselling service;
- support for an elder abuse safe suite program;
- funding for a provincial network for the prevention of elder abuse; and
- research.

Ageism...

...is a social attitude and a way of looking at older people that stereotypes them (e.g. weak, frail, disabled.)

It is important to examine whether you carry ageist attitudes with you in how you look at and respond to abuse.

Ageism and Elder Abuse

Examples:

- Downplaying or denying alleged abuse
- Not believing the older person
- Questioning the sincerity of the older person (assumptions about memory)
- Discounting the older person's rights (to money or property)
- Reducing the self worth of the older person
- Assumptions, e.g. physical frailty, mental capability, treating older person like a child, removing decision making process
- Ignoring an older person's wishes
- Brush offs

Winnipeg Elder Abuse Working Group

Purpose:

- To provide a multidisciplinary forum to address elder abuse issues within Winnipeg
- To develop an elder abuse strategy for Winnipeg
- To ensure coordination of elder abuse services in Winnipeg

Representation

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Age & Opportunity Inc. | • The Manitoba Public Trustee |
| • The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba | • The Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat |
| • Community members (older adults) | • The Protection for Persons in Care Office |
| • Geriatric Medicine | • The Winnipeg Police Service |
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority



Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg
Caring for Health À l'écoute de notre santé



Websites

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
www.afm.mb.ca

Age & Opportunity Inc.
www.ageopportunity.mb.ca

Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
www.mun.ca/elderabuse/

Community Legal Education Association
www.communitylegal.mb.ca

International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
www.inpea.net/links.htm

Legal Aid Manitoba
www.legalaid.mb.ca

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/bilingual.htm

The Manitoba Public Trustee
www.gov.mb.ca/justice/publictrustee/index.htm

Protection for Persons in Care Office
www.gov.mb.ca/health/protection/index.html

The Regional Health Authority
www.rha-central.mb.ca/

Seniors & Healthy Aging Secretariat
www.gov.mb.ca/shas/

Winnipeg Police Service
www.winnipeg.ca/police/

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
www.wrha.mb.ca

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within this guide was accurate at the time of printing. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please report any changes to Age & Opportunity in Winnipeg at 956-6440.

It's Everybody's Business is designed by better together photography www.bettertogetherphoto.ca and is published by Age & Opportunity.

We acknowledge the Winnipeg Region of the Canadian Mental Health Association for allowing us to make an adaptation of the Mental Health Resource Guide.

Age & Opportunity Inc. Central Office
200-280 Smith Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1K2
Phone: (204) 956-6440 Fax: (204) 946-5667
E-mail: info@ageopportunity.mb.ca
Website: www.ageopportunity.mb.ca